The Commonweal

November 10, 1950

Bitter Sugar

MAX AWNER

Peguy: The Radiance of His Art

NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE

The Disenchantment of Scott Fitzgerald

FRANCIS DOWNING

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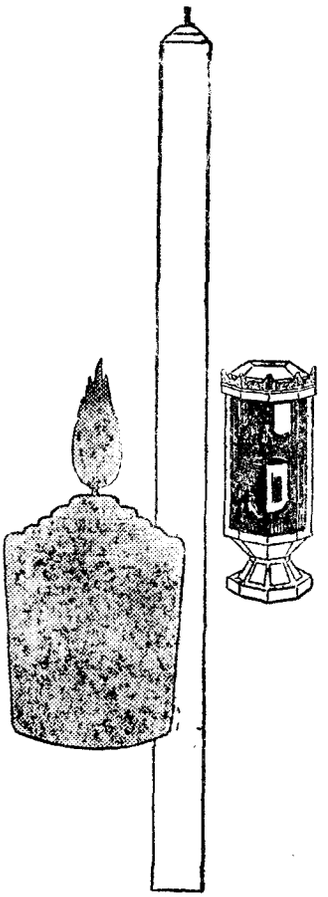

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The Commonweal

WEEK BY WEEK

Philippine Prescription

THE summarized versions of the Bell Economic Survey Mission report make it appear to be a statesmanlike effort. It calls for sweeping economic and political reforms, but in such a way as not fatally to embarrass the Quirino Government. Yet this report to the President ignores neither the unrelieved condition of the bulk of the Filipinos nor the corruption notorious in certain official circles there.

For one thing the report suggests a pattern for the Point IV type of treatment for underdeveloped countries, East and West. It establishes as the key to the problem the increasing of productive efficiency. For only by producing considerably more per man can the peoples of the world attain decent living standards.

In terms of the Philippine economy, here are some of the things that must be done: well-tried methods of increasing the yield of basic crops must be put into operation; the Philippine Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources must be built up, with an expanded Extension Service, a well-established agricultural college and a number of local farm experiment stations; it is all-important here (as in most predominantly agricultural countries) to establish a series of rural banks to supply credit to small farmers; tenants must be guaranteed reasonable security on their land and a just share of what they produce; large holdings should be purchased and broken up for resale to small farmers.

The recommendations for industrialization are also applicable for Point IV operations in other lands. They include the systematic study of the islands' natural resources, building up power and transportation facilities, liquidation of poor enterprises; financial assistance to productive enterprises now in operation and diversification of the whole Philippine economy by encouragement of appropriate new industries.

The most newsworthy aspect of the report is the extent of its actual criticisms of the present Quirino government. Those in office are criticized for failing to do more to remedy the plight of both workers and peasants. The United States mission underlines the wide disparity between rich and poor Filipinos and the little that has been done "to improve the economic position of lower income groups." Apparently there is real substance to this charge, but it must also be remembered that this disparity is actually smaller in the Philippines than in most countries either in the Orient or in Latin America, and that there is a growing middle class. It is in comparison with the United States that the difference between the living standards of the poor and the wealthy in the Philippines stands out so starkly.

The Quirino Government is not a strong government. On this score it suffers in comparison with the Rojas Government of a few years back. But the United States is partly responsible for the ineffective and dishonest use of sums it has contributed for the purpose of Philippine rehabilitation. After the war the devastation on the islands was appalling. Vast sums were urgently needed. But the trouble was that this country—involved as it was in so many international situations—furnished the money without paying much attention to the way it was spent. That much of it should have gone into private pockets and for imports of luxury and non-essential goods was inevitable. Meanwhile the Philippine economy has languished.

AND that leads to the crucial sections of the report made by the Bell Mission. Will the present government accept the guidance and supervision which this country will require before granting the quarter-billion dollars aid estimated as necessary for the Philippines in the next five years? To do so requires courage and vision on its part. And the Americans charged with the

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• NEXT WEEK •

CLAIRE HUCHET BISHOP, author of the new volume, *All Things Common,* discusses the child's conscious need of group achievement.

"A perusal of children's stories in America for the last hundred years reveals this country to be the land of individual achievement, of the self-made man. . . . But now the whole world is teaming up in search of a new style of living where cooperation, human relationship, takes precedence over personal success."

responsibility of negotiating and administering such a program will need to attain the summits of tact and of disinterestedness.

Disarmament

WHEN that 20% taken from the paycheck every week (and the more than 20% taken from foreign earnings) is spent on the guns by which citizens may die, then disarmament becomes more than a word associated with the ineffectual diplomacy of the twenties. It is a concept that is passionately advocated by those people who are close to despairing of peace. And to those to whom hundreds of billions of armament dollars could mean grain and milk, disarmament has marvelous, if distant, sound. India sees this clearly, and replied to President Truman's disarmament proposal with the suggestion that all the powers report by March the extent to which they would disarm, and the amount of money they would then contribute to a peace fund.

But Mr. Truman's UN Day speech carried conditions. He wanted disarmament, but only if there was to be disarmament in all classes of weapons, by all the nations. And he wanted foolproof enforcement of that disarmament. What he said was in reply to what the Russians had proposed: they wanted all the nations to decrease their armies by one third, and they wanted the first user of the atomic bomb to be branded an aggressor. The Truman reply was the only one possible. One third disarmament would only freeze the present weakness of the West in the face of Russia's four million troops and 25,000 tanks.

Mr. Truman was also attempting to block a possible Soviet trap. Mr. Vishinsky had hinted in a recent speech that Russia would be willing to agree to effective control of atomic weapons. It is just conceivable, as Joseph C. Harsh has suggested, that the Soviets would agree to atomic control on Western terms, reasoning that the single Western military advantage would thus be eliminated, while the USSR's overshadowing dominance in conventional arms would remain. The spectacular propaganda advantage of such a move must at least interest the Soviets. Mr. Truman urged that the questions of atomic controls and conventional arms be considered together in the UN, so that disarmament would

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really be that—and not the West's invitation to destruction.

So last week the volume was turned up on disarmament, Picasso's dove flew in the warm air, and people again had their desire for peace played upon. Disarmament remains the road to peace, but it is not likely to be used, because such terms as Mr. Truman gave are the only rational ones, and they have little chance of acceptance. So until the Soviets agree to realistic disarmament, the West will continue to have only the choice it faces today: between vigorous strengthening and uniting, or playing dead, and eventually becoming just that.

Activity at Ellis Island

OF ALL the crimes with which a President can be accused by his political opponents perhaps the most surprising is that of administering the letter of the law. That is the charge leveled at Mr. Truman by Senator Homer Ferguson in connection with the Anti-Subversives law passed by both Houses over the Presidential veto. And the occasion for the charge arose when certain distinguished foreign visitors were unceremoniously whisked from several incoming boats because of suspected connections with various forms of totalitarianism in the past.

Here is a case where good politics—if such it is— makes good sense. What better way could the President find to awaken the public to the need for revising the absurd provisions of this hastily-assembled, eleventh-hour legislation he opposed than to instruct the Department of Justice to enforce it at its face value? Senator Ferguson himself is directly responsible for other, less hasty sections of the anti-subversive legislation which bears his name. It would seem that he would get further in achieving his over-all objectives if he would turn from the President to his own party and his fellow-sponsors of such legislation, prevailing upon both to support changes which application of the present law clearly shows to be desirable.

If this sober tack did not seem likely night before Election Day, its chances will have improved with the passing of that date. There would seem to be considerable bi-partisan sentiment for reconsideration of the immigration sections of the bill.

There is that much to be said for strict enforcement.

Damned If We Do, Damned If We Don't

ONE night recently a pack of wolves, in a disagreeable mood, came out of the wilds near the city of Lucknow in northern India and, descending on the people there, made off to the woods with a number of the city's inhabitants. A few days later, Lucknow was host to a second but less hostile visitation, this time in the form of a group of delegates from sixteen countries, including the United States, who gathered there to attend the eleventh international conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations. The Institute is an unofficial body composed of scholars, journalists and business men devoted to the study of the political and economic affairs of Asia and the countries of the greater Pacific basin.

The conference lasted for twelve days. During almost all of this time the delegates from India and Pakistan raised such a howl over United States' policy in the Pacific that the American delegates, apprehensive as they doubtless were of all growling noises, may have wondered from time to time who it was that was snapping at them.

The Indian complaint, the violence of which astonished the Americans, was along the following lines. The United States, they said, in refusing to recognize Communist China, in protecting Chiang Kai-shek on Formosa and in crossing the 38th parallel in Korea, was not letting the Asiatics run their own business but was, instead, surrounding Asia with military bases designed to protect the American imperialist position in the world. And, said one Pakistan delegate, since the "United States places no value upon Asiatic life," she is willing to use the atomic bomb again in Asia but not in Europe and is, consequently, planning to fight Russia in Asia.

Where economic aid is concerned, the Indians accused the United States of tying strings to her gift dollars in an effort to line up nations against Russia. The Indians want none of this pressure. Their "national self-respect," they said, "was more important than economic advancement," however desperate their need for help. A Pakistan delegate declared that the Marshall Plan had been devised "to disrupt trade in Europe and redirect it across the Atlantic."

In responding to all this, the Americans, as well as the British and Canadians who came to

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their support, were a bit flabbergasted. One American, Robert North of Stanford University, summed up his countrymen's perplexity in this fashion: "If the West gives aid it will be feared for its imperialism; if it withholds aid it will be denounced for its indifference; if it establishes garrisons it will be attacked as expansionist; if it keeps its troops at home it assures the success of aggression in Asia; if it expresses no political preference it will be accused of siding with reaction and the status quo; if it supports progressive forces it will be condemned for intervention. In other words, we are damned if we do and damned if we don't."

AFTER the conference was over, Pandit Nehru told the American delegates that he did not share the "extreme" views held by some of the Indians. It is possible, of course, that some of these extremists may be caught in the fog of the Soviet myth. (Some of the Institute's past activities have been criticized in this country as overly leftish.) At any rate, it is reported that the anti-American sentiments they express are quite prevalent in government circles in India.

But even if these views were only those of a few Indian delegates, we have learned, in late months, how foolish it is to ignore or to underestimate the influence of the intellectual, whether of the left or the right, because he has a place all his own in the world of modern politics. It is not just that he has his secrets to sell. The intellectual, as a scientist, as a diplomat, as a journalist, engages in the legal and illegal traffic of ideas and he has, of late, rather convincingly demonstrated that his ideas have consequences.

The Indian idea of American policy, as expressed at this conference, is not something to be shrugged off. It appears to be part of a rising resentment against us in Asia, of which the late outburst in the Philippines is a sample.

That the Indian should have this idea of us is not altogether a mystery. After having spent a good part of his life as a colonial subject, the Indian wants no more of anything that looks like a new imperialism and so naturally his suspicions are hyper-sensitive. He is conditioned by his culture and his religion to be suspicious, too, of physical violence, of force, and of a lavish display of material wealth, all of which he sees and dislikes in American policy.

The Indian, with his newly-won independence, came on the scene of post-war world politics sincerely hoping to spread a humane and non-violent idealism there. Instead, he has walked right into the most crushing, and potentially the most violent and deadly exercise in power politics man has ever seen. One can almost read the signs on the faces of the Indian diplomats today of that depressing disappointment, that special hell endured by those who have seen their best hopes kicked around in the dust.

It can be said with good reason that it is an unrealistic idealism that has led India somewhat astray and has prevented Nehru and his government from seeing the Communist tyranny for what it really is. Consider the almost pathetic and naive awakening Nehru has had to the Chinese Communists, whose aggression against Tibet he has learned about with "regret and surprise." So it is that the Prime Minister and the Indian intellectual are receiving their education in the facts of political life.

WE MAY hope that our education in the affairs of Asia will advance side by side now with the Indians' increasing familiarity with totalitarian tactics. Then a more satisfactory meeting of minds is bound to occur between the Asians and ourselves.

But for that to happen the United States must somehow come to the aid of the impoverished Asiatics in such a way that the Asiatic nations will enter into a partnership with us, a partnership respecting their independence, a plan in some way similar to the European Recovery Program. Perhaps this can be done with the least suspicion through the United Nations. If India is at first reluctant to join such a plan, then it is left to the United States to demonstrate her good intentions by forming an aid program to cover Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia and Southeast Asia, a plan that will give articulate proof of our desire to see Asia become a group of free nations.

If the United States does this, it is true that she will almost certainly be damned as an imperialist power. That is a risk we will simply have to take. Because one thing is pretty clear now: if the United States does not act swiftly and effectively in Asia, in the long run about half of the people of the earth may well have reason to lament the fact that they have lost their status as free men. And then they will know that, at a time when they needed it most, not all the good will in the free world was enough to save them from the darkness. That, we think, would be an even more damning indictment.

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Bitter Sugar

The sugar on the table comes at the cost of "stoop labor."

By MAX AWNER

THE spoonful of sugar in the morning coffee would not taste so sweet if people knew that it represents a crystallization of bitterness in the lives of tens of thousands of men, women and children. One third of all the sugar consumed in the United States is the product of a system of labor peonage.

About a third of the sugar used in this country is made from beets. Not the red beets from the A&P, but big, creamy-white, roughly elliptical roots that often grow almost as large as footballs and may weigh as much as ten or twelve pounds. All these sugar beets are grown here on the mainland.

Five to ten thousand beet farmers in the Rocky Mountain region, the principal sugar-producing area, annually employ 60 to 75 thousand manual agricultural workers—known as "stoop labor." The vast majority of them are Spanish-Americans, and roughly two-thirds are migrants, that is, workers who "follow the crops" from one farm locality to another. Beet workers labor from sun-up to sun-down during a season that extends intermittently from mid-May till November, for an average annual cash income of less than $1,000 per family.

They live in ramshackle huts built for a Colorado July, and they must stay there till the cold Colorado or Wyoming November, at which time they may drift into one of the larger Rocky Mountain cities to swell the relief lists. Undernourishment is widespread. Tuberculosis rife. Juvenile delinquency a problem. In Colorado alone close to thirty per cent of all patients in tuberculosis hospitals are Spanish-American farm workers, though they form less than five per cent of the state's population.

Despite child labor restrictions, many youngsters under legal age work in the beet fields. Since they are constantly on the move, great numbers get to school only sporadically if at all.

(The President's Commission on Migratory Labor, appointed by President Truman in June 1950 has been holding hearings in all areas of the nation where migrants are employed, and is slated to submit its report and recommendations to the President by December 15, 1950. One member of the five-man commission is Archbishop Robert E. Lucey of San Antonio, Texas. The appointment of this commission and the support and publicity given it is perhaps the most encouraging action yet taken in the direction of alleviating conditions among migratory workers. The commission, however, has power only to recommend.)

★

AFTER World War I, adobe hut colonies of beet workers first began to spring up in the fields. The huts, consisting usually of two rooms, were normally sold to beet worker families for $250 to $500, the price to be repaid out of wages. Fifty to one hundred huts usually made up a colony. Though the huts contained a minimum of conveniences, the sugar companies sought to justify this by pointing out that few if any of the workers had ever enjoyed such conveniences.

Wages were inadequate and most workers were constantly in debt. It was often charged, in fact, that the growers cleverly kept the workers in debt in order to tie them to a particular farm or locality. Food and supplies were usually bought on credit from the growers' own stores. When the workers finished the harvest in the fall, they often found their food bill had eaten up nearly all their promised wages. As the workers were wont to put it when asked what had happened to their money: "De ducks got it"—which was their quaint way of saying that the boss had "deducted" nearly all their pay for food and supplies. So the worker usually had to remain in the area till spring, often going further into debt in the meantime, to pay off his indebtedness.

With the depression of the thirties, however, the plight of the beet workers struck rock bottom. Starvation would have been the rule had it not been for almost universal public relief.

Yet despite the masses of unemployed, the sugar companies, ever eager to turn human misery to their advantage, continued to recruit more workers. While five hundred able-bodied beet hands subsisted entirely on relief in Colorado's Larimer County alone in 1937, the sugar companies were importing others.

MAX AWNER *is the assistant editor of the AFL's Colorado Labor Advocate. His short stories and articles have been published in such magazines as Opinion, Frontier and Jewish Life.*

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The outbreak of World War II afforded the sorely pressed workers somewhat of a breather. Though beet wages remained almost stationary throughout the conflict, there were numerous other opportunities for employment.

After the war, however, the pendulum swung back. As thousands of families who had deserted the beet fields for more rewarding employment began to drift back, the crisis gradually deepened. Another labor surplus, such as had existed during the depression, began to build up. During the war, when there was something of a labor shortage, the sugar industry, aided and abetted by the government, had launched a program of importation of foreign laborers—mostly Mexicans—to make up the lack. When the war ended, the sugar barons, having had a good thing, refused to give it up. Importation of foreign labor, instead of tapering off, boomed. Through this renewed flooding of the agricultural labor market, wages and other standards were driven through the floor. In 1945, for example, there were at one point 1,800 Mexican nationals—surplus labor—being supported by the government at the Fort Lupton, Colorado, farm labor supply camp, while native workers vied with one another for crumbs. Of course, under such conditions, practically no attention was paid to the cultural, educational or religious needs of the workers.

★

ALL but a few of the beet farmers are relatively small operators. Though sugar beets have among the highest value per acre of any crop, they have never made any but the biggest landowners wealthy. Just as the workers are exploited by the growers, the growers, in turn, are practically vassals—true, in many cases willing ones—of the sugar refiners. In 1938, the most recent year for which accurate figures are available, the average beet farmer in the United States had a gross income of less than $1,000. Though this figure is undoubtedly a good deal larger now, sugar beets are still a marginal crop.

In view of this continued struggle for existence, it may well be asked why farmers keep up the unequal battle and continue to grow beets.

One reason is the "marriage of convenience" between the beet growers and the processors. Though there seldom is much love on either side, each derives enough pecuniary benefit from the union to forestall a divorce. The processors, for their part of the bargain, bring in the cheap labor, providing the farmers with greatly reduced labor costs. This enables the beet raisers to sell their crop to the refiners at a lower price—which, of course, was the object the latter had in mind in the first place. The fact that the processors in most cases can well afford to pay higher prices for their beets, thus permitting the grower-vassals to pay higher wages to their worker-serfs, somehow is never recognized.

J. Edwin Sharp, in his 1940 study of the beet sugar industry, *Sugar Dollar,* suggests several other explanations: lack of profit from competing crops; pressure on tenant farmers by landlords (who, incidentally, often *do* realize a sizeable profit from the use of their land by beet farmers) and, most important of all, the need for credit to obtain funds for financing the next crop.

As Sharp shows, the smaller growers are virtual debt slaves of the big sugar companies. On the other hand, the relatively few big beet growers fare rather well. Many of them are stockholders in the sugar companies, which serves in their case further to solidify their marriage of convenience. They usually dominate the county, regional and national beet farmer organizations, and, together with the manufacturers, underwrite the expenses of energetic, capable lobbies in the state legislatures and in Washington.

The Great Western Sugar Company is by far the largest of the beet sugar processors. During the war years GW's annual net earnings ranged between 15.8 per cent and 20.6 per cent. This last figure occurred in 1942, with a record cash earning of $5,285,424. In 1948 and 1949 earnings dropped to $4,973,470 and $4,044,323.

The Great Western Sugar Company produces roughly one-third of the beet sugar refined in the United States. This industrial octopus, with tentacles in almost every state where sugar beets are grown, controls, in a very real sense, the destiny of the entire industry, from the sorely pressed farmer to the sweating beet digger in the fields.

★

THESE are some of the factors that have led the sugar industry into the mess in which it finds itself today. The beet workers are in wretched condition; most beet growers are operating marginally and are at the mercy of the big processors; the latter are making unconscionable —if diminishing—profits, paid for in the form of outrageous prices by the consumer. Where do we go from here?

The first move must be made by the government. At the Sixteenth National Conference on Labor Legislation, held in Washington in the fall of 1949, the committee on migratory labor recommended, among other things, the following government actions applicable to the beet worker situation:

a) The immediate discontinuance of the importation of farm labor from below the border. The committee urged immediate cancellation of the treaty with Mexico under which Mexican workers are imported to work on American

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farms, and the imposition of penalties on employers hiring such workers who have entered the country illegally.

b) The enactment of state and federal laws to eliminate false propaganda used to recruit migrant labor.

c) Strengthening of the United States Employment Service and the state employment services, whose function was declared to be the recruitment and placement of migrant workers.

d) The enactment of state laws requiring more careful supervision by state agencies of working and living conditions on farms employing migrant workers.

e) Removal by the states of residence requirements for entitlement to health and welfare services, and increased appropriations by Congress for grants-in-aid to the states for such services. (Recently, when one hundred children were found near death from starvation in an Arizona farm labor camp, it was discovered that the state was powerless to aid them because its laws required three years' residence to be eligible for state relief.)

f) Concerted action by state officials and private organizations to alleviate conditions. (The recently retired governor of Colorado, Lee Knous, early this year appointed a state-wide migratory labor council in line with that suggestion.)

The committee also strongly urged the extension of federal and state minimum wage, workmen's compensation, child labor, unemployment compensation, and old age and survivors insurance laws to all migrant workers.

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ONCE the government has taken the initiative, organized labor will be sadly remiss if it fails to grasp the golden opportunity to unionize the beet workers. It is axiomatic that the most exploited worker is the best material for organization. The beet worker, however, has long been the spectacular exception to this rule. First of all, there was the stubborn opposition of the growers, backed by the big sugar companies. More important was the ignorance, timidity, apathy, and lack of leadership among the beet workers themselves. And, sad to relate, the apparent indifference of most segments of organized labor to the plight of these most exploited of American workers. A vital factor is the nature of the occupation itself. The work is seasonal and sporadic, and the workers, as a consequence, are conspicuously transient, both in activity and outlook. Naturally, such conditions are anything but conducive to organization.

If the government acts to stabilize the industry, however, the way will be cleared for some forward-looking, militant labor union to step in and provide the cohesiveness and orientation that only a union can. Such a union is the AFL National Farm Labor Union (not to be confused with the National Farmers Union, an independent organization of small farm operators). Born only a few years ago, it underwent its baptism of fire—and what a baptism!—in the great fruit orchards of California, where it engaged in a titanic struggle with the Associated Farmers of California. The first phase of this battle served to put the union in the public eye and rally vigorous support from other segments of organized labor. Such support should stand it in good stead when the union takes on the sugar-company-backed beet growers.

While all this is going on, the sugar companies will not be idle, naturally. Just as long as they can get away with it, they will take any steps necessary to retain their strangle hold on the industry. Government regulation, some phases of which have been outlined above, and the pressure of an aroused public opinion must act as twin restraining influences.

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WHICH brings us to our final factor—the individual beet worker and his family. All the regulation and organization in the world won't do him any good if he fails, or refuses, to grasp the part he, as an individual, must play in achieving his salvation.

There are a number of enlightened and dynamic Spanish-American leaders in the Rocky Mountain area. For years they have been fighting valiantly to instil in the beet worker an awareness of his individual worth and power, of his capacity for self-betterment. But they have been fighting almost alone, against hopeless odds, and consequently they have only scratched the surface. They have had no greater success in pricking the public conscience than in arousing the workers' enthusiasm.

The beet worker must be educated. Only in that way can he be brought to a full realization of his own human dignity and personality. The unions can and will do part of this job while they are organizing on the economic level. But a socially and spiritually aware public must shoulder the greater responsibility. The beet worker must be helped until he is ready and able to help himself. That will take lots of hard work. It will need the utmost cooperation between his own leaders and social, educational and religious workers outside Spanish-American ranks. But the job can be done. It must be done if the beet worker is to command his rightful place as a self-respecting workman, an essential and recognized part of our economic structure, and a dignified and respected human being.

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Peguy: The Radiance of His Art

In his work there shines the light "which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world."

By NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE

CHARLES PEGUY'S poetry stands for the enshrinement of the Word. To that one truth, his entire works witness. For the light which shines through them is the light 'which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world'; and this in turn gives to his sentences and phrases a luminous quality—a spiritual radiance. Throughout his books this quality is apparent, though in no sense can it be said to be a static quality; on the contrary, despite his constant use of repetitions, there is always a steady progression of spiritual thought taking place, and perhaps Gide, better than any other critic, hit the nail on the head when he described Péguy's poems as litanies.

Certainly his emphatic, recurring rhythms distinguish his writings from those of his contemporaries, in much the same way as Henry James's psychological penetration distinguishes his fiction. Indeed, whether one is a Péguy-adherent or a James-fancier is really beside the point: one does not necessarily have to admire an author to know when one is in the presence of genius; and with James, as with Péguy—different as their two respective talents are—there can be no doubt about their genius. Both writers have their marked idiosyncrasies of style and in neither case is the impact of their work on the reader immediate: rather, it has a cumulative effect which grows with the years.

For my own part, I must confess to a certain impatience on first reading their books. It is over two years since I have read a word of James, nearly five years since I first stumbled across the poems of Péguy. The manner in which James in his later novels uses a technique giving the impression that the author is looking over his shoulder at another man who is also looking over his shoulder, can, at the time, be extremely irritating; but in retrospect one can see in the method a means whereby a composite picture of the reactions of a set of characters is built up. By diversity in a total situation depth is achieved and the reader given a deeper awareness of both the complexities and the possibilities of life. Yet the realization of this process is delayed; one may not be fully aware of it until several weeks or years later.

Again, with Péguy it is possible to read long tracts of his writings without being aware that they are making any effect upon one—in fact reading in duty bound rather than for any personal value which one may derive from the content behind the words. Only later—sometimes after several weeks, sometimes years later—does one realize that the effect has not been so negligible as it at first seemed; that the repetitions have been absorbed and have become a part of one's general experience.

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CREATIVE work of this order must perforce be far removed from the more "popular" kind whose chief attraction is either its "agreeableness" or its "charm"; for it is literature which is deadly serious in its purpose, and literature which is serious in this sense is also by nature "spiritual" in its roots. This is so because literature, which is a defense of language, must always to some extent—wittingly or unwittingly—be a defense of the meaning of the Word; and this factor which relates James's genius to that of Péguy also enables one, without equating their two particular kinds of genius, to see that continuity of spirit which underlies all great writing.

There are, however, certain critics who deny the continuity: they are to be found mostly in Communist and Catholic ranks. The Communist critics argue that literature is only a means of propaganda, and reduce it to a commodity similar to guns or butter, while the Catholic critics campaign for the general acceptance of such terms as 'Catholic novel' and 'Catholic poet.'

Péguy is described as a 'Catholic poet' and Graham Greene as writer of 'Catholic novels.' What really matters in each case is whether Péguy's poems and Greene's books are works of art: on these grounds alone do they stand or fall as contributions to European literature, though in a reckoning of them it would be as foolish to leave out the part religion has played in the two authors' minds as it would be not to take into account the fact that Péguy sprang from peasant stock, or that Greene for several years

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was a journalist on the staff of *The Times*. Both factors have had an obvious effect upon their work, and their acceptance of Catholicism as a way of life, while it has not *per se* made either author into a poet or novelist, has at least placed their work in a scale of eternal values and to this extent has deepened their perception of life.

★

LIKE Greene, Péguy's work always stresses the importance of the heart. As Santayana once wrote when still a young man:

> It is not wisdom to be only wise
> And on the inward vision close the eyes,
> But it is wisdom to believe in the heart

or, as Emerson commented in his essays: "Genius is religious. It is a larger imbibing of the common heart."

In modern writing, however, the heart has fallen into disrepute: having been clinically dissected during the thirties, it was largely ignored in the forties and apart from a handful of contemporary writers — Greene in particular — remains today out of fashion. The result is that much current fiction and poetry, when it has risen above the level of *reportage,* has seldom become more than a series of observations on life: there has been little attempt to break through to the man within, to study the underlying motives of human actions. It is probably symptomatic that a novelist like C. P. Snow should have won such acclaim today: his books are competent and well manufactured, but they lack fire. The inner compulsion which is one of the marks of genius is missing. For there are times with writers like Péguy and James and Greene when their writing reaches such an intensity that they automatically strip their hearts bare: in seeing their work as a reflection of their life, it thenceforward becomes only possible for them to work out their salvation through their work. Herein lies the fulfilment of their vocation, and it is awakening to such a vocation that Péguy attempts to show in the case of Joan of Arc. For him, Jeannette is a great militant woman saint:

> There is the Church militant; we belong to it; it is the Church of soldiers in a certain way; we belong to it; everybody goes through it, everybody has gone through it; we know what we have to do in it.
> We go through it. Everybody has to see service in it, to see service for a certain time.
> Service that does not have to be renewed.
> One doesn't re-enlist.

(One is reminded of a later echo in Greene's novel, *It's a Battlefield.* As the chaplain says there, "One can't hand in a resignation to God.") Again, there is for Jeannette the moment of calling:

> The hour you awaited for days and days, the hour you awaited since your baptism, the hour you awaited since all eternity. Since your eternity.

She must make her choice; and in making her choice she chooses her own form of life—modeled on the Passion—and prescribes her own martyrdom. For Péguy saw his own life in the same terms, though in actual fact it did not end in martyrdom. It was instead a pilgrimage and, walking each step of the way, he gradually came to find that his position was the Catholic one. Yet, although he had begun life as a free-thinker (and so far as is known assisted at Mass for the first time only three weeks before he was killed in 1914), his faith, once found, never faltered. With him, the heart had its reasons which reason knew not; with him, it was his heart conscious of God which brought him to faith. It is for instance typical of his whole approach to the Passion that he should conjure up a picture of the angels preparing to bathe Christ's wounds in these words.

> Five dressings for the five Wounds.
> With extra fine linen.
> Made of flax.
> But linen somewhat used.
> Because it is softer.

Some might say that the note of domesticity struck in the emphasis on used linen "because it is softer" denotes a feminine talent. But this is to mistake talent for the perception of genius. The great moments in literature are the simple moments—when Lear cries for a button to be undone, or the Duchess of Malfi beseeches her executioners to see that her children have their nightly medicine. So is it the same when Péguy presents the Passion. The words he employs are the simple words of ordinary speech and the things that he says are the obvious ones, for it takes the courage of genius to say the obvious things simply. Otherwise they would be too obvious and stand in no need of being said.

It is here that one returns to one's point of departure. Péguy's poetry is both a beginning and an end, and in that end lies its beginning because "in the beginning was the Word and the Word was God." His enshrinement of the Word is not in a heavily vaulted mausoleum, but in a tomb in which symbolically enough the stone has been rolled back; and still re-echoing, now as forty years ago, one hears his litanies. For him the Church Militant has become the Church Triumphant, and his litanies those of the Resurrection. "I do not believe that I have ever spoken of the *Catholic world.* I have often spoken of the Church, of communion. I do not feel truly myself, I do not really touch the bottom of my thoughts save when I write Christendom. Only then I fully see what I say." The statement is as characteristic as it is final.

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FROM ENGLAND

London's East End

AN ever-recurring topic in THE COMMONWEAL is the problem of American minorities, especially Negroes and Jews: and I find that even well-informed Americans sometimes do not realize that similar problems do not play an equal part in English life, for the simple reason that, apart from certain special cases, our minorities of this kind are small, localized and unimportant.

Nevertheless, where those minorities do exist there we are liable to find problems of group relations; and nowhere more clearly and acutely than in the "east-end" of London. Here the first considerable foreign element arrived during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with a big influx of French Protestants, refugees after St. Bartholomew's Day and the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

★

THE Huguenot community as such has now entirely disappeared, unlike the second "invasion," of Irish, who after the "hungry forties" of the last century already numbered nearly 100,000 in East London alone. Also unlike the French, they were not well received. Religious bigotry played a part on both sides, but a more exacerbating factor (as it was elsewhere in Great Britain, e.g., in the industrial areas of South Wales) was the Irish willingness to work for cut wages.

Persecution in Spain and in Poland brought a steady stream of Jews during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The struggling central-European Ashkenazim soon far outnumbered the wealthier and better cultured Sephardim, and were in due course reinforced by refugees from government-inspired Russian pogroms: 100,000 of them, a quarter of all the Jews in Great Britain today, settled in the East End between 1880 and 1910.

Other permanent minorities—Germans, Poles, Lithuanians—are of little importance; and it may interest readers of the more picturesque and sensational English fiction that the Chinese colony in Limehouse—now dispersed by bombing—probably never exceeded 1,000 souls.

Legal restrictions on Catholics, and therefore on the Irish, were abolished in 1829, and the last Jewish disability was got rid of nineteen years later. And today it is probably true that for practical purposes the only serious threat to public order in East London arising from minorities would be an outbreak of so-called anti-Semitism, which is always there below the surface in varying measures. During the war, not only in London but throughout the country, the authorities showed themselves extremely nervous of anti-Jewish feeling, which was fomented by crypto-fascist groups.

But although public order may not be disturbed, it does not follow that human and social relations in respect of religious and "racial" minorities are satisfactory. Individual justice and tolerance have hardly kept pace with legal enlightenment and progress in democratic ways: nor have people reached that ideal stage where, not content with a negative attitude of unhostility to customs, beliefs and origins different from their own, they have positive interest in and sympathy for them.

And so there has recently been formed the Council of Citizens of East London, to oppose "racial" prejudice and discrimination and to develop mutual respect and common effort among Christians and Jews, Protestants and Catholics, atheists and believers, colored and white. This is no "welfare-work" coming in from above or outside. The chairman is the Warden of Toynbee Hall in Whitechapel (named for the social reformer Arnold Toynbee, father of the historian), the vice-chairman is a local Catholic priest, and the committeemen are local representatives of religious and other bodies, including schools and youth organizations.

★

THE council was formed in the midst of the election campaign last spring, and at once succeeded in getting pledges against racial and religious bigotry from all 21 local parliamentary candidates. But at present its main work must be educative, beginning with the schools. The council offers speakers on the ancestors of the local people and their traditions, English, French, Irish, Jewish, Negro, Indian, how they came to London and their contribution to its life; on the various religious faiths; and on "living together."

There are teams of various origins to lead discussions in clubs and institutes. There are movies, including one called "Prejudice," whose theme is the clash of two neighboring families in the US, and a pageant of local history is in preparation. But the best index to their method and spirit are the pamphlets of the schools committee, of which two have been published at seven cents each.

The first is a brief historical account, with enlightening details, of the Huguenots in Spitalfields, the Irish in Wapping and the Jews in Whitechapel, written both frankly and fairly. The second is a descriptive account of the Church of England, Catholicism, Protestant Nonconformity, Judaism and Islam, each written by one of the faith concerned, and illustrated from its history in East London.

One of the most valuable things in this booklet is the point that today our prejudices are more often economic, anti-foreign or "racial" than religious, but that careless, insensitive and inexact religious teaching aggravates anti-Semitism.

The reception of this citizens' council has been most encouraging. An editorial article in the *Hackney Gazette* (a newspaper with no political or other tie-up) said that the movement "promises more for neighborly understanding and the spirit of 'Let's face the future' than all the party-political pledges about full employment, incentives to production and the maintenance of the welfare state put together."

DONALD ATTWATER.

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SO THEY TELL ME

The Disenchantment of Scott Fitzgerald

I AM going to write here in my own new column about a book I have not read. This is a practice I dare say more often engaged in than admitted; and I can claim at least exemption from hypocrisy.

The book in question is *The Disenchanted* by Budd Schulberg and I am prepared to argue that it should not have been written. For it is a synthetic part of a revival of interest in the work of that fabulous, pathetic, gifted and richly textured writer, F. Scott Fitzgerald; a revival begun five years ago by Dorothy Parker and John O'Hara. We are going to have a good many books about Fitzgerald and about his work which, though part of it was carelessly done, is the authentic tribute be paid to his own prodigal and enviable artistic affluence.

It can hardly be argued that Scott Fitzgerald was not greatly gifted, that between the *Scarlet Letter* and *The Great Gatsby* there are few American novels worth our pleasurable inquiry, that he did not come into the arid American scene drenched with talent that dripped away from his fevered fingers like jeweled raindrops, that he did not bring to American fiction both precision and surprise, that his very great artistic wealth did not remind us of the poverty of writers before him all the way back to Henry James, that he did not possess a pearl of great price richer than all his tribe, and that he did not throw it away. It can hardly be argued that Fitzgerald was not as vital as a young girl's dream, that there was not a serious lesion of his wonderful vitality, that he was not jealously shadowed by yelping shapes of tragedy, that his later life was not "a real dark night of the soul" in which it was "always three o'clock in the morning, day after day."

Some of this cannot be successfully argued for it was Fitzgerald himself who knew and told us that "I had been only a mediocre caretaker of most of the things left in my hands, even of my talents." Even so; like unto Fitzgerald nothing had happened to America before, and there has been nothing and no one like him since. The only measure of his failure is the measure of his gifts. The only measure of the artist is the character of his work.

★

IT IS possible, of course, to maintain that the man and his work are separable. The corollary used to accompany this statement is that one may choose to write about the man, as another may choose to write about his work. The statement, I think, is at best a dubious proposition. It is, of course, possible to make the separation: not to make it is to deny both the need for and the fact of biography. It is more than necessary, it is exciting to know about Shelley and Harriet, about Bramwell and the Bronte sisters, about Tolstoy and his wife, about Hemingway the hunter. But it is interesting only in the sense and to the degree that it illumines the work. The work abides: to write about Shelley without discussing "The Skylark," about the Brontes without discussing *Wuthering Heights,* about Tolstoy without *Anna Karenina,* Hemingway without *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is to make sterile essays for the trivial delectation of amiable idiots. Indeed, if you force me to the position, the *Pickwick Papers* are full of the language's richest humor—whether Micawber is Dickens' father is of no more consequence than is Jane Austen's clothes closet. In any significant sense the artist and his work are no more separable than Siamese twins.

But the essence of my present case is that if one chooses to make the separation then he ought to give us either a biography, full of fact, tightly documented as a seagoing boat is tightly caulked—no seams leaky with conjecture no matter how titillative, no free association, no dreamed-of thoughts or speeches, no guessed at, cheaply imagined, anguished, tortured revelation of the artist's mind—or a work of criticism. But biography wrapped in the easy theatrics and irresponsible flamboyance of fiction, in which the true or the imagined is neither known nor clear is, it seems to me, neither illuminating nor reliable.

Trevelyan's history of the Stuarts with its incomparable portrait of Charles the Second, the character of the soil, the court, the cabala, the orange girl new-raised to potent prominence, is worth, in its beauty and its truth, all the star-money alleged historical novels, grossly and feebly imagined, that shall pour from the presses until the last journeyman is dead and the last printing press is still and dry. Miss Wedgewood's *Thirty Years' War,* as beautiful, as rich in portraiture, as straight, as factual, as true as any history that has been written anywhere, ought to have proved forever that history is not alien to interest, that biography is history or it is nothing.

★

AS A man F. Scott Fitzgerald is something of a mystery, "elusive in life, God knows," says John O'Hara. About him, in the beginning at any rate, there was something more than the merely romantic, more than a seeming infinite capacity for romantic hope; there was about him something childish as if he had been born with eyes made wondrous from looking at heaps of bright, resplendent gold. Fitzgerald was born with an illusion, and the attempt to make friends with reality was a constant, reluctant, but necessary pursuit. It took him a long time to form what he called "the wise and tragic sense of life," to discover what he tried to teach his daughter, that "life is essentially a cheat and its conditions are those of defeat, and that the redeeming things are not 'happiness and pleasure,' but the deeper satisfactions that come out of struggle."

It was difficult for him to discover this because what William James called the bitch-goddess, Success, was not sought by Fitzgerald. She came to him swiftly when,

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neither by age nor by life, was he prepared for her; and she sat on his enticed lap and bewildered his mind and paralyzed his will. In the story called "Babylon Revisited"—which proves both that Fitzgerald lived in Babylon, a puritan in Babylon, and fled from it, tearing up his passport as he left—what happened to him is nowhere more unbelievably revealed. What Americans were like in Europe is nowhere more honestly disclosed and the quality of the fixed judgment, even somewhat shared by him, that was made on his whole expatriate generation, is here forever set down, exempted from defense. The waste of life and talent, the lavishness, the alcohol-clotted mind, the sense of adult infancy—Fitzgerald has put them all down, and no one needs to do it again. The biographer may document, if he wishes; the psychological atmosphere which the third-rate novelist feebly imagines is there, made present already by Fitzgerald. Budd Schulberg cannot create it, nor recreate it. It is absurd, it seems to me, that the inferior artist should go over what the greater artist has set down in the anguished honesty of his soul. Almost nothing about Fitzgerald can be said that he has not said better than anyone else is likely to phrase it.

But it is mere foolishness to conceive of Fitzgerald as among the disenchanted. First, it is a word which is hardly stricken with precision. Moreover, the important thing about him is that Fitzgerald at his death was writing his greatest work. Of it John Dos Passos has written:

> The establishment of a frame of reference for common humanity has been the main achievement and the main utility of writing which, in other times and places, has come to be called great. It requires, as well as the necessary skill with the tools of trade, secure standards of judgment that can only be called ethical. Hollywood, the subject of *The Last Tycoon,* is probably the most important and the most difficult subject for our time to deal with. Whether we like it or not it is in that great bargain sale of five- and ten-cent lusts and dreams that the new bottom level of our culture is being created. The fact that at the end of a life of brilliant worldly successes and crushing disasters Scott Fitzgerald was engaged so ably in a work of such importance proves him to have been the first-rate novelist his friends believed him to be.

★

I HAVE said that Fitzgerald was a puritan, even in Babylon. This put him in the peculiar tradition of our haunted writers from Hawthorne to Hemingway. But if he wrote two novels and some short stories that are among our permanent and treasured possessions, work which still holds the blaze of its origins, it was, in some measure, because Fitzgerald was troubled always by a sense of duty. It was not enchantment or disenchantment that made his work—it was, added to the artistry he always had, the fierce sense of duty unfulfilled, the self-enjoined task still undone, the gnawing need not only to affirm and reaffirm himself, it was the artist's necessity to perform work at the very top of his competence.

"No Achilles' heel," he wrote to his daughter, "ever toughened by itself. It just gets more and more vulnerable. What little I've accomplished has been by the most laborious work, and I wish I'd *never* relaxed or looked back—but said at the end of *The Great Gatsby*: 'I've found my line—from now on this comes first. This is my immediate duty—without this I am nothing.'"

F. Scott Fitzgerald can no more be realized or understood by the artificially applied stream of consciousness technique than Shakespeare's Queen Mab scene can be spoiled by the pedantic gloss of some professor of basic English. The light still shines brightly upon his work, casting itself on us from itself. In his "The Rich Boy," Fitzgerald wrote: "The rich are different from you and me." Hemingway said, "Yes, they have more money." But the story, like all the other stories, abides; all of them dazzle us with their lyrical wonder. As John O'Hara says, "The stuff is there. And it is mellow."

FRANCIS DOWNING.

Communications

Church-State

San Francisco, Calif.

TO THE Editors: I have just read with interest the article by Mr. Harmon Ashley, Jr., on "Church-State: Some Overlooked History" [Oct. 6]. . . .

The passage cited by Mr. Ashley from the Annals of Congress is indeed very helpful in interpreting the First Amendment to our Federal Constitution. Another helpful authority was likewise apparently overlooked or ignored by the Supreme Court in its opinion in the McCollum case. I refer to Joseph Story's "Commentaries on the Constitution."

The first edition of this work was published in 1833. It is still looked upon as one of the classics in that field. Speaking of it, Mr. Charles Warren, our foremost historian of the Supreme Court, has said: "Its appearance was acclaimed, by lawyers and laymen alike, as an important contribution to the defense of the principles on which the American Government had been founded." Mr. Justice Story's right to express authoritative views on the subject should be sufficiently indicated by mentioning the fact that from 1811 until his death in 1845 he was a member of the Supreme Court and concededly one of the ablest men who ever sat on that tribunal. His opinion as to the attitude that our government should take toward religion is fully set out in his Commentaries. It is quite evident from it that he never would have concurred in the idea of a wall separating church

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from state, as our Supreme Court held in the McCollum case. To use his words, "The real difficulty lies in ascertaining the limits to which the government may rightly go in fostering and encouraging religion." Any possible doubt that that language might leave in anyone's mind as to the views of this eminent jurist on the subject should be dissipated by one more sentence from his text: "It yet remains a problem to be solved in human affairs whether any free government can be permanent where the public worship of God and the support of religion constitute no part of the policy or duty of the state in any assignable shape."

Until that problem, so posed by Justice Story over a hundred years ago, is definitely and adequately answered by our Supreme Court, the present uncertainty as to the relationship of church and state in this country must continue.

ROBERT MCWILLIAMS.

The Catholic Press

Portland, Ore.

TO THE Editors: Diocesan journalism has deteriorated so swiftly during the past few months that it has become impossible for me to wait until February, 1951 to express my fears for the present state of the official Catholic press and renew my hopes for its future. To date, this year, I am able only to record my fears.

What has brought things to a head, currently, begins with syndicated Richard L. Stokes' October 13 column in the *Catholic Northwest Progress*.

Headed "Catholics Must Speak Out, White House and Kremlin, Against Entente Between," I quote:

"In the California gubernatorial race, victory for the Republican candidate, Earl Warren, and defeat for his Democratic rival, James Roosevelt, are regarded as already in the bag.

"It is not I who am guilty of 'besmirching the fair name of our late President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, whom the majority of Americans revere more than they do either Washington or Lincoln.'

"Mr. Roosevelt attended to that matter himself by making it possible, among other things, for high officials of his administration to parallel the treason of Julius Claus Fuchs."

In the same issue—"Hollywood in Focus"—by William Mooring:

"There should be no place in the movie structure for anyone who would refuse to declare his unqualified allegiance to this country and his equally emphatic rejection of its enemy, Communism.

"It is of a piece with Communist Party tactics to increase distrust and provoke unrest among racial and religious minorities to the detriment of national health and safety. The more films there are about conflicts between American Negroes and whites, Christians and Jews, etc., the better the Commies will like it."

Your editorial comment would be appreciated.

THOMAS L. SCANLON.

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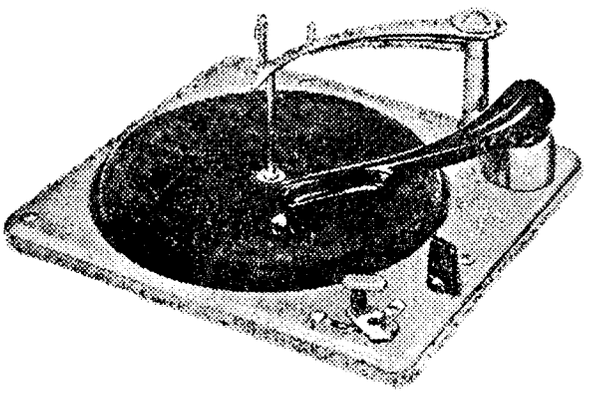

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The Stage

HOLD THAT TIGER—

THE title of John Steinbeck's new play, "Burning Bright," is derived from William Blake's "Tiger, Tiger," and serves notice on us at once that Mr. Steinbeck has something weighty to say and is going to say it on a pretty elevated level. Apparently convinced that the realistic observation and prose style with which he is identified are inadequate to his new and lofty purposes, Mr. Steinbeck has cast his lot with symbolism and a formality of diction many times removed from the concrete characterization and living speech of "Tortilla Flat," "Of Mice and Men," and "The Grapes of Wrath."

Mr. Steinbeck is determined that his new play shall be universal. Its story is not that of one man's struggle with sterility and failure, but of every man's. Its characters are not persons, but ideas about persons—the Responsible but Impotent Man, the Irresponsible but Creative Man, the Eternal Woman, and the Eternal Friend. They address each other throughout by their full proper names, as though they had heard of one another but had barely been introduced. It is always "Friend Ed," never simply "Ed." Joe Saul's wife always speaks of him as Joe Saul, even to his face. To emphasize the fact that these people are symbols, existing only in the third person, they are transferred to a new milieu with each act. In the first they are circus performers (it may be taken that life is a circus); in the second, they are farmers (fertility, at a rough guess), and in the third, they are discovered on the ever-changing sea (life is fluid, and changes can be made). Their language is not that of common life, but a deliberate and artificial construction, occasionally gilded with a pseudo-poetic word or phrase, designed to carry Mr. Steinbeck's considered profundities.

The curtain has no sooner gone up than someone says, "She wouldn't have gone else," and you know what you are in for. And you are in for it. As the evening goes on you will be treated to Friend Ed telling Joe Saul what a "nervy" thing he has done, to Mordeen (you heard me—Mordeen), speaking of the growing thing within her which will soon be reaching for the sky, and to Friend Ed's climaxing his great verbal assault on Joe Saul by calling him a "nastiness." You are going to be spared nothing this night.

★

NOW it is very possible to sympathize with Mr. Steinbeck's anxiety to increase the dimension and stature of our literary form. The literary method of the twentieth century has been, for the most part, to record in an almost scientific manner the surface phenomena of material reality. Its psychology has been reflexive and behavioristic, and its narrative method has been that of the detached and judicious reporter. While this so-called realistic form has the values of idiomatic accuracy (John O'Hara) and sensitivity to material surfaces (Hemingway on a duck hunt), it finds itself so concerned with the specific as to lose sight of the universal. Great art always has a sense of the universal, and Mr. Steinbeck knows this. The trouble is that he has gone about getting it in the wrong way.

He has junked concrete reality altogether and flown off into the abstract. It is a sophomore's mistake. Anyone who has ever taught playwriting will recognize this play. It comes in from the novice, once every year, in just these words, just these rhythms, just these pretensions. It is the old mistake of supposing that universality can be imposed from without, just because you want it to be. You decide on some generalized statement you would like to make, and suppose that you will be able to find characters who will willingly jump through hoops for you in order to illustrate it. Good plays, and above all, universal plays, don't get written this way.

★

THEY begin with something concrete—a real action, a real character—and stay with it, burrowing deeper and deeper into it, uncovering layer after layer of what is still reality, until the penetration is so complete that we seem at last to grasp the essential spirit which vitalizes it. Half the time I doubt that the artist knows what it is until he gets there. I don't think Shakespeare ever did find out what it was in Hamlet, though there is something half-glimpsed which tantalizes us. Anyway, this is the artist's method of seeking the universal, and it has nothing to do with the mathematician's. To get a little windy about it, it is a sense of immaterial form *within* material reality, not divorced from it. It is Mercutio, not Friend Ed. We do sense a universal of friendship in Mercutio, but it would be hard to put our finger on it, Mercutio is so fluid and so alive.

Graham Greene mentions in his *British Dramatists* that Macbeth is only a step away from the symbolic figure Ambition in the morality plays. But the step is everything. All figures known as Ambition, in fact all labels anywhere, are dead. Mercutio and Macbeth are alive because they are first men, and only finally significant men. The friendship and the ambition are in them, not stamped upon them.

It is unfair to hold Mr. Steinbeck to account for Shakespeare's successes. But it would be equally unfair to treat a man of Steinbeck's talent other than seriously. Further, the flight into symbolism is not a new problem, and it seems to be a particularly thorny one for men reared in this age of scientific realism. All the great realists—Ibsen, Hauptmann, Strindberg, O'Neill—wound up as symbolists, and the last stage was worse than the first. The reason why the problem is so acute in our time is that the scientifically trained mind cannot conceive, or deliberately rejects, the metaphysical possibility that an essential and spiritual form does inhabit, and does animate, each lump of living matter. Why work so hard to penetrate matter when the interior form is not there to be perceived? To the scientifically trained mind, the notion of universal form is only a man-made equation,

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existing outside and apart from matter, an intellectual construction after the fact. Hence, when the realist has wearied of his literal reporting and yearns for the universal, he can only escape to an equation, to an intellectual construction. He calls his equation The Master Builder, or The Sunken Bell, or Dynamo, or Burning Bright. Having abandoned the reality which might have proved more fertile than he could imagine, and over which he already had a considerable mastery of the surface, he finds himself scratching about on the bare rock of abstraction. That is Mr. Steinbeck's present plight, and it is a sad thing to report that there is not a moment in this more ambitious play to touch any given moment in the earthy "Of Mice and Men."

No production could help "Burning Bright" very much, but the present one is geared to expose its most artificial and embarrassing qualities. Guthrie McClintic has staged it with reverence, and the effect is stupefying. Kent Smith, a fine actor, is made to seem rigid and awkward. Howard da Silva, another fine actor, is made to bubble friendliness to the point where he bears an uneasy resemblance to Jerry Lester. Only Barbara Bel Geddes maintains sufficient reserve in the face of the play's pretentiousness to command your respect, and, with it, your sympathy. (*Closed Oct. 27 at the Broadhurst.*)

THE CURIOUS SAVAGE

JOHN PATRICK'S humor is sly and original, and I had a very good time at his play. There are defects to be found with the evening—Mr. Patrick's treatment of his villains is too strident, and the stage direction is so over-accented as to seem to be trying to beat the play to death—but I found myself sufficiently charmed and moved to ignore the occasional faults. The play tells the story of a wealthy widow who decides to indulge, in her last few years, all the foolish whims she has suppressed in a lifetime of self-denial. For this, and for her money, her children have her committed to a polite mental institution, where she finds the inmates more attractive than her own sane but greedy family. It is with the inmates that Peter Glenville's direction falters seriously. Instead of allowing them to be casually and matter-of-factly unbalanced, he frequently forces them into an amateur's concept of lunacy, and this does some damage to Mr. Patrick's pleasant and relaxed script. Nevertheless, the lines are so freshly funny, and Lillian Gish is so delightful in the lead, that I hope you will go to see it. (*At the Martin Beck.*)

ARMS AND THE MAN

BERNARD SHAW'S old but still very playable comedy about a realistically minded soldier who punctures the hero-worship of some very romantically minded Bulgarians is seen at about half-voltage at the Edison's Arena Theatre. Shaw wrote a comedy of attitudes, but the performers do not attitudinize sufficiently

MANY-COLORED FLEECE ($3.50), **Sister Mariella Gable's** new collection of short stories by or about Catholics (or both), is a pleasant sort of book to announce, because you know everybody will want it (with the possible exception of the gentleman above). If it were just more of the same as **OUR FATHER'S HOUSE** ($3.00), this would still be true, but much has been happening since that appeared: Catholic short story writers are developing, non-Catholic writers showing much more awareness of what being a Catholic involves, and both developments are reflected in the new collection. The twenty or so authors include Frank O'Connor, Graham Greene, John Steinbeck, and Brendan Gill.

This, as we said, is everybody's book; the other book published on the same day, **John Ryan's BEYOND HUMANISM** ($3.00), is not. Of course everybody *ought* to be interested in Catholic education, what's right with it, and what's wrong with it (quite a lot, according to the author) but are they? Well, are you? If you are, then get hold of a copy, but if you have a tendency to mark striking passages and write notes in margins, either throw away all your pencils before you start reading or resign yourself to writing a new book round the edges of this one. John Ryan is not a placid author, but a great producer of arguments (no doubt that's why he is such a good teacher) and we defy anyone to read this book without becoming involved in agreements, and disagreements not only with the author but with everyone else who has read the book.

It is a curious thought that you may lose your reason and still not lose your hold on the Faith. We didn't know it was possible till we read **Eithne Tabor's** book of poems, **THE CLIFF'S EDGE: Songs of a Psychotic** ($2.00). She describes, quite remarkably, the state of her own mind, her reactions to various kinds of treatment and above all her steady clinging to God, the one reality left in a world grown unpredictable and terrifying. It is consoling to know that in such shadows God may be seen at last as more real than anything else.

THE GOLDEN WELL by **Dorothy Donnelly** ($3.25) is a rather fascinating book in which she traces the unity of the hopes and fears of mankind in the language of symbols—a universal language, she says, through which can be traced the same search for a lost paradise, the same hope of great joy to come in the folklore, legends and poems found all over the world.

The Christmas **Trumpet** will be ready next week—let **Lucy MacGill** know if you don't get it, or if you have moved since September. It is a remarkably gay number, which shouldn't be missed.

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to project either the intention or the humor. Until the last act, when the text simply forces it upon her, Lee Grant is no moonstruck Raina, but an ordinary and reasonable girl. Sam Wanamaker likewise is either unable or unwilling to make an ass of the heroic Sergius, and when he bemoans his own complexity in what should be a very funny sequence, he has you taking him seriously. The result is to lose about half of the laughs that are in the script, and to miss the meaning of the satire. It is a performance without an interpretation. (*At the Edison Hotel Arena.*)

WALTER KERR.

The Screen

Chin Up

THERE comes a week in the life of every movie critic when he suddenly realizes he's been through all this before; he's seeing the same old plots, with perhaps a few new trimmings and new faces—or worse yet with the same old faces. It is then he doubly appreciates such original Hollywood efforts as "Sunset Boulevard" and "All About Eve," such adult English films as "Fallen Idol" and "The Rocking Horse Winner," and various thoughtful foreign-language imports about bicycle thieves and open cities. There are other bright moments in the days of a critic—even when he sees less distinguished movies, movies that are fun to watch because of personalities involved. The films that really discourage a reviewer, however, are those that waste their stars in expensive productions with trite unimaginative stories. It is films like these that a reviewer would like to talk about when people envy him his job. This has been one of those weeks; so steel yourselves.

If the very mention of Mrs. Miniver makes you feel nostalgically sentimental about the British, then there is the slightest chance that the sequel to the first film about her will hold your interest. But if the mention of Mrs. Miniver, or even the thought of that war film that sang her praises, brings out the worst in you, you'd better steer clear of *The Miniver Story.* In it Greer Garson still stands as the symbol of the indomitable, chin-up British woman. Having survived the war in "Mrs. Miniver," she is ready to face the problems of post-war England. It is, perhaps, symbolic that most of these problems concern her and her family whom she sees, smiles-through-tears, together now for the first time since 1940: her devoted architect-husband (Walter Pidgeon) who is restless and wants to go to Brazil to build; her young son who got amazingly vulgar as an evacuee in America; and her grown daughter (Cathy O'Donnell) who has fallen in love with a married general.

Our brave Mrs. M. has to work fast because she now has an incurable disease and perhaps only six months to live. She takes this news like the courageous little soldier she is; and immediately tackles her daughter's unfortunate romance. But in a single interview with the married man involved (Leo Genn) she is able to convince him he's still in love with his wife. Then Mrs. Miniver straightens out her daughter and starts to prepare her husband for a life in which she will no longer share. The problems confronting the Minivers are no doubt similar to those faced by many families; but the handling and solution of these problems in "The Miniver Story" belong strictly to the rose-covered-bower school. Director H. C. Potter thoughtfully saves us from the death scene, but anyway by that time all tears have been spent. The one cheerful note about all this is that now with Mrs. Miniver dead, there won't be another sequel. Or will there?

★

BARBARA STANWYCK and Clark Gable are very popular screen stars and when they have good material they have exhibited why they hold such high rating. Shown together in *To Please a Lady,* even they cannot save the old chestnut about a couple of big shots who finally learn that "you're nobody until somebody loves you." Barbara's a columnist with 40 million readers; Clark's a daredevil racer, a tough guy in a tough racket. They both believe, although they exhibit their ideas in different ways, in a sort of kill-or-be-killed doctrine. They give each other quite a pushing around as they fall in and out of love with each other. And at the end, they get what, I suppose, they deserve: each other.

★

WHEN I went to the preview of *Dark City* I knew I was going to see a new young actor who is a discovery of Producer Hal B. Wallis. The movie showed that Charlton Heston could act and might one day become a star; but this vehicle thought up for him had a familiar smell, and, in spite of its quite exciting moments, had a story that never rang true. Mr. Heston portrays a shady gambler who, with several even more shady cohorts, fleeces a sucker (Don DeFore) who commits suicide. The gamblers then find themselves pursued by a mysterious killer and have plenty of cause to wish they'd left suckers alone. The pretentious plot also involves Lizabeth Scott and Viveca Lindfors; and while you may enjoy seeing a few less-familiar faces, you may wish that the themes were also less familiar, or at least more believable.

★

SYLVIE AND THE PHANTOM, a French import with English subtitles, offers a pleasant contrast to Hollywood clichés; however, this fantasy is very much on the whimsey side, so its appeal is rather limited. It concerns a chateau in which there really is a ghost and a young lady (charmingly played by Odette Joyeux) who is in love with him. Her father, greatly distressed because he has sold the portrait that inspired the ghost, gets the bright idea of hiring an actor to pose as a ghost

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at the girl's sixteenth birthday party. Events get a little complicated when three fake ghosts and the real one show up for the festivities. This story is definitely tenuous, but Director Claude Autant-Lara keeps it moving smoothly and provides a lot of fun. This is obviously for special audiences—those who can take Barrie and Milne.

★

ANOTHER French film designed for special audiences is *Paris 1900.* This is chock-full of clips from old movies and it covers practically everyone who was in and near Paris between 1900 and 1914. Monty Woolley's reading of the narration written in English by John Mason Brown is definitely on the crisply sophisticated side, but the subject matter and famous people (ranging from Gide to Renoir, from Tolstoy to Sarah Bernhardt—oh, just everybody) can take the terse comments in stride. As the picture runs on and on through its 76 minutes, I found it got a little crowded and wearisome. A few of the shots are pointlessly steeped in French naughtiness that shocks a Puritan's idea of propriety; but, as I said, "Paris 1900" is for very special audiences—indeed. PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

Of Note

TAKING FILMS SERIOUSLY

THE London *Tablet* (128 Sloane Street, S.W. 1), comments on the award given by the International Catholic Film Office (OICI) to the French movie "Dieu a Besoin des Hommes" at the Venice Film Festival. The film is concerned with an unworthy priest among a group of Breton villagers. In Italy the film was publicized by local Communist groups as a good example of anticlericalism in the movies, before the Catholic organization awarded it the international prize.

> It is evident that such a film is very powerful. J. L. Tallenay, the French critic, writes: "I do not know of any film which illustrates more overwhelmingly the significance of Confession, of Holy Communion, or which expresses more clearly the role of the priest as the necessary intermediary between God and men." It has implications which only an educated audience will appreciate to the full. It confronts the Catholic critic with a dilemma accepted by not a few among those working for Catholic film action. It is assumed on the one hand that only those films which can be grasped by the undiscriminating millions are fit for Catholic recommendation. On the other hand, it is supposed that films having a serious purpose and dealing with controversial subjects in an adult manner must needs be suspect as anticlerical or Communist in tendency.

Such a dilemma can be rebutted by insisting that no service is done to the Catholic position by refusing to acknowledge the right of the cinema to pose serious problems. Such problems demand a Catholic answer, and it is the duty of the Catholic critic to be able to bring his influence to bear on the right side in any controversy that arises. In the words of the President of the [Catholic] jury at Venice, "It seems to us that in the present state of de-Christianization or religious indifference among the masses, this beautiful and impressive film is capable of reawakening religious sentiments; the notion of and regret for sin; the necessity of the priesthood and the sacraments. We feel that the positive influence it will exert in this sense, especially if it is interpreted as it ought to be by responsible critics, will quite outweigh the danger of a false interpretation at the hands of one section of the public."

This raises the whole question of the proper attitude of Catholics towards the cinema, about which there is no time to dilate here. It is at least interesting to note that only two other films came up for consideration by the OICI. They were "Give us This Day," Edward Dmytryk's story of the exploitation of a group of Italian laborers, and "Justice est Faite," in which Andre Cayatte treats of the self-examination of a jury at a trial.

Dmytryk came under suspicion in Hollywood when he refused to acknowledge the right of the Un-American Committee to compel him to answer their inquisitions. Cayatte's film suggests that society needs to examine its conscience in matters concerning the workings of justice.

It appears, therefore, that those films come nearest to winning the approval of the International Catholic Film Office which deal with serious social and moral problems. This is in accord with the sentiments of the Encyclical on films in which Pius XI wrote that "good motion pictures . . . are able to favor understanding among nations, social classes and races, to champion the cause of justice, to give new life to the claims of virtue and to contribute positively to the genesis of a just social order in the world." It is evident that this blissful condition is unlikely to materialize without much controversy and misunderstanding in the first place. It is also evident, therefore, that any films which attempt to explore this ground visually will be subject to the same kind of misunderstanding. The only thing to be feared is that the zeal of the rigorists may bring it about that this potent means of propaganda is lost to the Catholic cause. If, therefore, the annual award of the *Office Catholique International du Cinema* does nothing more than to convince the world of film that Catholics can take the medium seriously, it will have deserved well.

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Books

The Disenchanted. Budd Schulberg. Random House. $3.50.

IN PLACE of the usual statement that any resemblances are merely coincidental, Budd Schulberg introduces his third novel with part of Henry James' preface. ". . . that genius had long haunted me," it reads, ". . . what I was to do was merely to recognize the type, to borrow it, to re-embody and freshly place it. I proceeded to do so . . . it had assuredly taken the recorded transmitted person, the image embalmed in literary history to fertilize my fancy . . . therefore, let us have here as little as possible about its 'being' Mr. This or Mrs. That. If it adjusts itself with the least truth to its new life it can't possibly be either."

In this "new life" the genius is Manley Halliday, a novelist whose brilliant, brittle chronicles of the follies of the Golden (Plated) Twenties were those not of a cynical observer, but an enthusiastic participant.

After more than a decade of flamboyant living and financial success, he finds himself in the late Thirties broke, debt-ridden and separated from his once gay and beautiful wife, now a dunning neurotic struggling first to exist, and then to reestablish a stature considered outdated, over-rated and empty by a generation of intellectuals who are People With a Purpose. Halliday submits to Hollywood. The procurer in this case is an egotistical producer who senses that the name and the talent will do wonders for a new college musical "Love On Ice." The payment, $2,000 for 15 weeks, will hardly take care of Halliday's debts.

Headed east for Webster College, locale of the musical, and recent Alma Mater of Shep Stearns, its author, Halliday falls off the wagon and back into the quicksands of self-pity and sentimental yearning for an unrecoverable past. To Shep, who innocently caused his fall, the crumbling artist relates his life. What he doesn't directly tell Shep is revealed in an irregular series of flashbacks. Once off the ledge of sobriety and reality to which he had so painfully and unsteadily climbed, Halliday declines rapidly and spectacularly. The literary glamor boy who "couldn't do anything badly" in his heyday just can't finish the process of growing up which, he once said, is that of "continual disenchantment for the new."

IT IS possible that to most of the hundreds of thousands of book-club members who will read "The Disenchanted" Scott Fitzgerald may be no more than a name, a vague symbol of what we indulgently call the Jazz Age, something like Pussyfoot Johnson, Clara Bow, Earl Carroll's Vanities, John Held, Jr. For those, the Manley Halliday of Schulberg's fertilized fancy will be an engrossing, fully developed, consistent fictional creation.

But to the many who have a fair, if incomplete, knowledge of Fitzgerald's life and place in American letters reading the book will be a sort of schizophrenic literary experience. Despite Schulberg's advance disclaimer, "Fitzgerald" keeps popping up where the letters say "Halliday." "Webster" reads as "Dartmouth" more often than not. There are many other examples. This is fictionalized biography, to be sure, and there will probably be a lot of controversy, particularly among Fitzgerald's close friends, many of whom are still quite vocal.

Schulberg has moved up from the heels of *What Makes Sammy Run?* and the punks of "The Harder They Fall." The flashy, erratic style of those novels often obscured the maturity of his implied judgments, his ability to open people up so you can decide what makes *them* run. These gifts are more richly displayed, more fully developed in *The Disenchanted*. There are weaknesses: the book seems uneven in spots, too long, and trite and awkward when Schulberg is trying to recreate some scenes with which he appears personally unfamiliar. But there are episodes of great power and vividness, in which the thoughtful reader can discern some penetrating observations on the evils of casting stones.

PAUL V. FARRELL.

Russia and Western Man. Walter Schubert. Frederick Ungar Co., $3.75.

THIS is a most remarkable book, considering that it was published for the first time in 1938 in Germany — some twelve years ago. In those days a historical, sociological and metaphysical analysis of the contemporary Russian problem had scarcely been undertaken outside of Russian intellectual circles. Even among Russians, the question had not been raised in its entire breadth and depth, except by a very few religious thinkers, such as Berdyaev and Bulgakov.

Dr. Schubert, of German and Baltic background, was a Protestant by birth and later joined the Russian-

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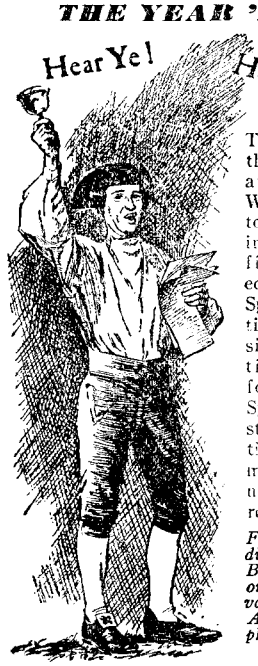

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Orthodox Church. He became a Soviet citizen when Latvia passed into the Russian orbit, and taught sociology and philosophy at the Latvian State University in Riga until the German occupation. Since June 1941, we have had no information about Dr. Schubert. It should be remembered that the original version of his book, published in German under the title *Europa und die Seele des Ostens,* caused considerable comment in Nazi Germany. In those days Russia was one of the main targets of Hitler's ideological attack, and at the same time the goal of his almost mystical, or rather pseudo-mystical *Drang nach Osten*. When the Nazis invaded Russia and met the Russian people face to face (whom Rosenberg treated as "inferior"), Dr. Schubert's remarks and views were recalled by certain more thoughtful Germans.

Today, both atmosphere and setting have changed. There was, and probably will ever be a sort of spiritual, cultural and philosophical competition between Russia and Germany. But here, in the United States, the problem is mainly political, economic, and to a certain extent, social. Even in the present acute crisis, it is not Russia as such, but Communism which arouses America's deep resentment. *Russia and Western Man* will certainly interest the American reader, since the book speaks of the authentic perennial values of Russian spiritual culture. The author obviously sympathizes with Eastern man. However, his book is outside the range of personal reactions. It is an objective analysis of what the Russian soul is made of. Approximately, I believe, the analysis is right: a religious and messianic spirit animates this soul, but this spirit is doomed to undergo great temptations. Religion and anti-religion are often strangely mingled. This was stated by Dostoyevsky. As to Dr. Schubert, he belongs to the so-called "historiosophic school" of thinkers (philosophers of history), who are the product of Slavic and Germanic countries, rather than of Anglo-Saxon and Latin ones. The most typical representatives of this group in Germany in recent years were, of course, Spengler and Keyserling; Schubert is closely linked with them. He believes that the East still bears the seeds of detachment from this world, while the "Promethean West" has exchanged these spiritual treasures for a mess of pottage: technology. However, Schubert's conclusions are not as pessimistic as Spengler's. Instead of a doomed West, Dr. Schubert confidently states that West and East will finally meet, in order to produce the new man of "the millennium."

HELENE ISWOLSKY.

The Age of Scandal. T. H. White. Putnam. $3.00.

THE humorous novelist Mr. White here makes a foray through some of the minor corners of

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the late 18th century, a period which he correctly regards as under the patronage of Horace Walpole. The age of the great professional writers had ended, that of the Romantics had not begun; the age of scandal was dominated by titled amateurs. To quote Mr. White, "In the first half of the century the authors became rulers, in the second the rulers became authors."

There has been much scouring in out of the way places for curious odds and ends, but the letters of Horace Walpole, and Boswell's *Johnson* supply a large part of the material, which, if not invariably amusing, is at least interesting. But one gets a little tired of some of the items dished up, so that after awhile it becomes slightly tedious to read that "Lord Fermanagh, when ill for fifteen days in 1716, drank 'horse-dung posset' daily. The Chevalier Manfredi, 'an excellent doctor,' also recommended chickens fed on frogs to Lady Caroline Lamb." It also becomes evident as we proceed that a not very large book has been padded a good deal with the story of the unfortunate Admiral Byng on the one side, and a quite irrelevant account of the Marquis de Sade on the other. Still, those who will treat this book as one not to be read straight through, but to be dipped in at random occasionally, will find a good many plums, if some of these may call for a rather strong stomach.

THEODORE MAYNARD.

Watch for the Morning. Thomas Sugrue. Harper. $3.50.

THE subject here is Zionism, developed with the help of prominent Zionists and very frankly and openly in favor of Israel, boundless with honest admiration of the Jewish pioneers. Sugrue's sources of information are conscientiously mentioned; there is no attempt to disguise the tendency of his apologetic book. The other side of the story, the Arab case, is cut short. The author mentions that veterans of the Irgun, and the Stern Gang talked to him, "along with Arabs and Druze." But it seems the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine did not impress him; they remain in the shadow while all the stagelights are focused on the pioneers of Israel. One feels that the problem of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land is not fully understood by the author.

The book is the fruit of five happy months in the Holy Land. The author came to Israel "to discover whether the new state was an historical accident, a Balkan country on the wrong side of the Mediterranean, or whether it was an event in the spiritual life of humanity, a new pattern of society, an advance post in the efforts of mankind to break through to a higher sphere of life." The book tries to convince that the latter is true and Israel is a great hope for the future of mankind. The author stresses that in returning from the West to their "homeland," the Jews took with them "the abstract riches" of the civilization in which they had dwelt; he emphasizes their efforts in science, in sociology, in philosophy and in the arts. He does not give much thought to the problem of whether all these products of a late Occidental civilization are fit for the structure of Palestine and how they affect the customs and morals of the Arab population. His description of the Zionist achievements in the Holy Land are honest and impressive. He lived with the heroes of his story through all the experiences of the Palestine rennaissance. Thus we have the epic of the new Jewish state, written, not by one involved in its story, but by a Christian outsider who confesses his deep admiration for Israel and the Israelites.

MAX FISCHER.

Tight Little Island. Compton Mackenzie. Houghton. $3.

SELDOM have time, place, and event converged upon one another to better purpose. The whiskey drought on Great Todday and Little Todday, two of the thirstiest islands in the Outer Hebrides, had reached proportions reasonably called epic. Nothing at all was coming in during those final days of the war.

Then it was that the *S.S. Cabinet Minister,* outward bound with fifty thousand cases of whiskey, went gracefully and conveniently down. Since it was Sunday, the Catholics of Little Todday had the advantage over the Protestants of Great Todday, who were forced to look on at the "salvage" operations until the Sabbath was over. But everybody on Great Todday agreed that the *papanaich* were very decent about it all in seeing to it that nobody on Great Todday went without. As counterpoint to Celtic loyalty, Mr. Mackenzie introduces the Sassenach. Master-Sergeant Odd may have had trouble speaking "the Garlic," but he has an understanding heart. Not so Captain Waggett, the pompous head of the Home Guard, with his stuffy ideas about the superiority of duty-paid whiskey. But Mr. Mackenzie, always a canny propagandist for the North, carries everything off in appropriate gaels of laughter.

Tight Little Island, of course, bears a remarkable resemblance to the movie of the same name, but it is even more zany, and more circumstantial in its zaniness. This first of a promised new "Scotch series" of novels is a relaxed and genial bit of froth that goes as effortlessly down as Prince's Choice, Father Macalister's favorite "sensation" from the wreck of the good ship "Minnie." RILEY HUGHES.

• REVIEWERS •

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MAX FISCHER teaches at the New School For Social Research.

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